

Remarks

Claims 1-27 are currently pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1, 3, 4, 13, 15, 21 and 23 have been amended and claims 2, 14, and 22 have been cancelled.

The Office Action rejected claims 1, 9-13 and 21 under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by Mestais et al. (United States Patent No. 6,329,651). For the reasons stated below, Applicants need not address this rejection.

The Office Action indicated that claims 2-8, 14-20 and 22-27 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants have amended the claims accordingly.

Specifically, claim 1 has been amended to include the elements of claim 2, thus allowing for cancellation of claim 2 and the change of the dependency of claim 3 to claim 1. Claim 4 been rewritten in independent form to include all of the elements of previously presented claim 1. Claim 13 has been amended to include the elements of claim 14, thus allowing for cancellation of claim 14. Claim 15 has been rewritten in independent form to include all of the elements of previously presented claim 13. Claim 21 has been amended to include the elements of claim 22, thus allowing for cancellation of claim 22. Claim 23 has been rewritten in independent form to include all of the elements of previously presented claim 21.

Conclusion

Applicants submit that claims 1, 3-13, 15-21, and 23-27 are now in condition for allowance. An early indication of allowability is earnestly solicited.

If any fees are due in connection with this Preliminary Amendment, the authorization to charge deposit account 14-1270 for the fees associated therewith is hereby provided.

Respectfully submitted,



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